THE LONELY BULL

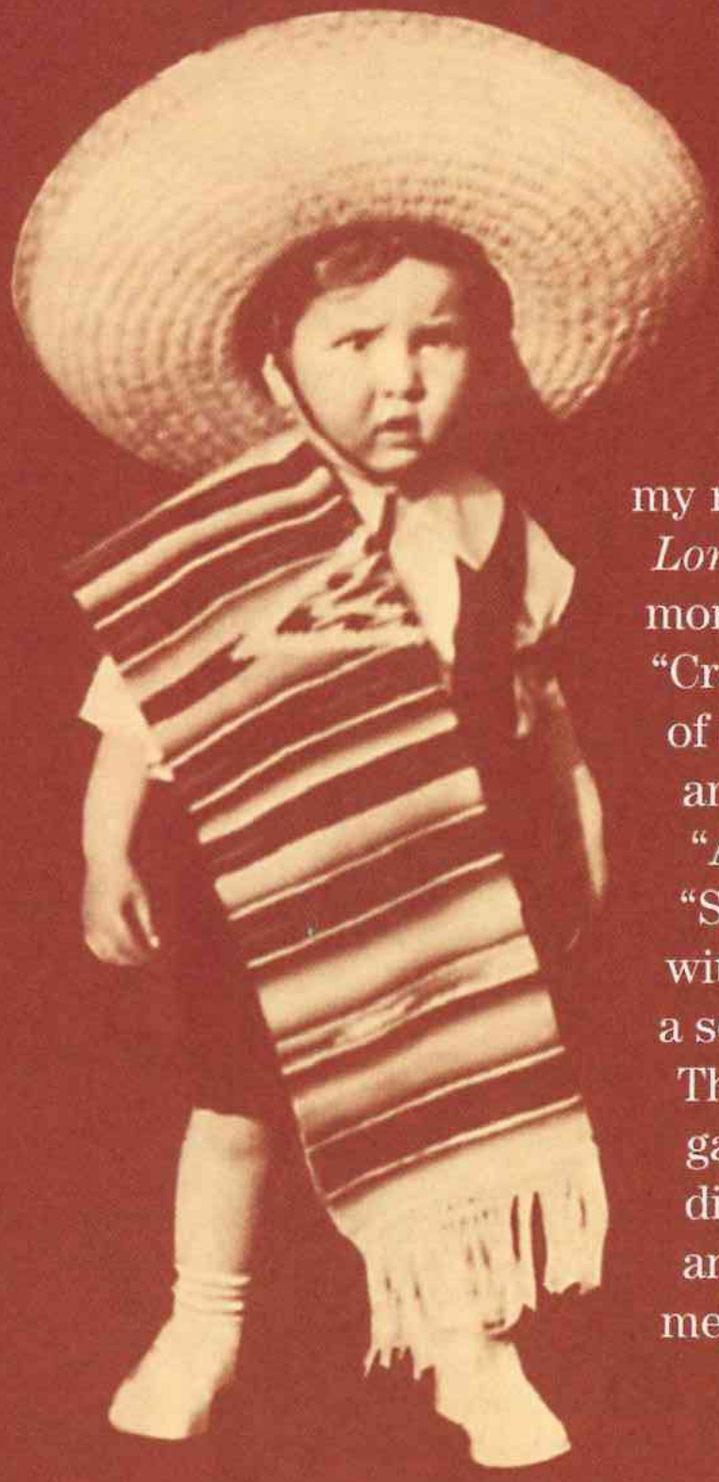
Herb Alpert & the Tijuana Brass

THE LONELY BULL
(EL SOLO TORRO)
(Sol Lake)
A & M
RECORD CO.
Almo Music Co.
(ASCAP)
Time 2:15
(CAR-1005)
THE TIJUANA BRASS
Featuring HERB ALPERT
703

LONG BEFORE THERE WAS A TIJUANA BRASS,

I played for many weddings and parties in the Los Angeles area and had the ability to learn by ear the popular songs of the day on the trumpet. In 1962 after experiencing my first bullfight in Tijuana, Mexico, I was inspired to find a way to musically express the feelings I felt while watching and listening to the wild responses of the crowd in the stands and hearing the group of brass musicians who introduced each new event with a rousing fanfare. The bullfight was gory, beautiful and sometimes troublesome to watch, but the energy in the stands was overwhelmingly exciting. My pursuit became to capture that on tape.

On many occasions I worked with a piano player by the name of Sol Lake, who was much older than me and had a wonderful flair for a good original melody. He handed me a tape of a song he had entitled "Twinkle Star" that ultimately became "The Lonely Bull."



Herb Alpert, age 2

And an engineer friend, Ted Keeps, had recorded the sounds of an actual bullfight and captured thousands of people shouting, "Ole," enabling me to complete my musical picture.

"The Lonely Bull" 45 single started my recording career at age 27. *The Lonely Bull* album followed with two more songs by Sol Lake: "El Lobo" and "Crawfish." I also picked on some songs of the day, like "Desafinado," "Mexico" and "Let It Be Me." Then I wrote "Acapulco 1922," "A Quiet Tear," "Struttin' With Maria" and cowrote with my wonderful partner, Jerry Moss, a song called "Tijuana Sauerkraut."

The success of *The Lonely Bull* album gave me the confidence to explore different types of songs and rhythms and further inspired my interest in melodies by Sol Lake.

— Herb Alpert

ORIGINAL LINER

NOTES

THIS IS TIJUANA MUSIC—THE NOISY MEXICAN-AMERICAN VOICES IN THE NARROW STREETS, THE CONFUSION OF COLOR AND MOTION—CAPTURED IN THE SOUND OF THE TIJUANA BRASS.

TIJUANA IS A SPECTACLE, A GARISH BORDER TOWN . . . BUT IT IS ALSO SOMETIMES A STRANGELY WISTFUL, ROMANTIC PLACE, AND THAT QUALITY IS REPRESENTED HERE BY THE OFTEN HAUNTING TRUMPET OF HERB ALPERT.

"THE LONELY BULL" STARTED IT ALL. HERB ORGANIZED THE TIJUANA BRASS TO COMBINE A PERSISTENT MELODY WRITTEN BY A FRIEND WITH THE INSPIRATION OF THE TIJUANA BULL-RING. WHAT EMERGED WAS A SWINGING MUSICAL COLLABORATION, AND A HIT. AND NOW THIS ALBUM AND A CHANCE TO HEAR TIJUANA IN ALL ITS ASPECTS, PLAYED BY TRUMPETER-ARRANGER-COMPOSER HERB ALPERT AND THE BRIGHT, BOLD, VERSATILE TIJUANA BRASS.

1. BLAME IT ON THE BULL

When Jelly Roll Morton went down to Tijuana in the 1920s, he ended up at the racetrack. When Charles Mingus went in 1957, he ended up in a whorehouse. When The Kingston Trio went in 1959, they ended up in the Tijuana jail. And when Herb Alpert went in 1962, he ended up at the bullring, and it changed the history of American popular music.

A 26-year-old, trumpet-playing son of a Jewish tailor from Kiev who had cut his teeth writing songs for Sam Cooke and Jan & Dean, Alpert drove south from his native Los Angeles to cross the border with his friend and partner Jerry Moss and sit in the stands at Tijuana's original Plaza de Toros. He watched the bulls go down one by one, each in their own dramatic ballet of blood,

but it was the general spectacle of the fights that moved Alpert the most: the roars of the crowd, the boda bags full of wine, the mariachis who played fanfares between fights. "There was something about that afternoon," Alpert remembers. "The feeling of the stands, the feeling of the whole way it was presented — it was something that touched me. I had never experienced anything like that before."

He went back to Los Angeles inspired, knowing exactly what to do with the simple, almost ethereal "Twinkle Star," the song that his friend Sol Lake had recently handed him to record. Thanks to Tijuana, Alpert and Moss had stumbled on the new sound for his trumpet that he had long been looking for. "I was always trying to find a way to present the trumpet in a way that would be palatable for radio," he explains. "So I got this inspiration to try to translate the feeling of that afternoon into a sound. I slowed the song down, played it on the piano and put two trumpets on it to simulate the sound I heard in Mexico. Jerry and I got some musicians together, recorded it and it sounded really good." But as the story goes, there was something missing, until Alpert's engineer buddy at Liberty Records, Ted Keeps, passed along some on-site bullfight recordings he made of an "Ole!"-chanting crowd that Alpert quickly incorporated into his new song.

Jerry deemed the track that resulted "The Lonely Bull" and Herb's band of studio session players (which included Sun Records guitarist Bill Riley and The Ventures drummer Mel Taylor) the

Tijuana Brass. To release the song, Alpert and Moss formed their own record label, A&M Records. The details, according to Alpert: "Jerry and I had done a record called 'Tell It To The Birds,' a record I was singing on that we had leased to another company, and they gave us $500 to distribute it. And with that $500 Jerry and I produced and recorded 'The Lonely Bull' and thought that we would try to put it out on our own label as a single record and see what happened."

What happened was that "The Lonely Bull" reached #6 after two months. Thanks to the previous Top 20 successes of Stan Getz's "Desafinado" and Booker T. & The MG's "Green Onions," the charts were ready for another instrumental. Six weeks after breaking the Top 10, "The Lonely Bull" had sold almost a million copies.

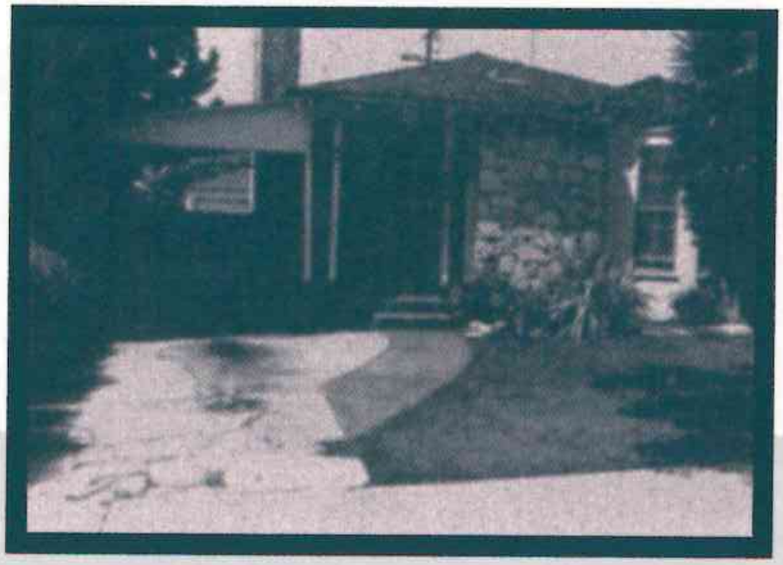
What happened was that A&M Records, one of the most influential musical empires of the 20th century, was born in a Tijuana bullring.

Fueled by the success of the single, Alpert and his crew of session musicians went back into the studio to fill out an entire album of Mexican-tinged pop instrumentals. "The Lonely Bull" and its 45 B-side, "Acapulco 1922," were there, as were "El Lobo," "Mexico," "Struttin' With Maria" and "Tijuana Sauerkraut" (after all, this was the same Herb Alpert who played drums while Charlton Heston's Moses descended from Mt Sinai in *The Ten Commandments*). Where there weren't Mexican references in

the song titles, Alpert left it up to the arrangements — with their lulling marimbas and evocative Latin American guitar strums — to do the Mexicanizing for him on covers of "Let It Be Me," "Limbo Rock" and even the recent bossa nova favorite "Desafinado."

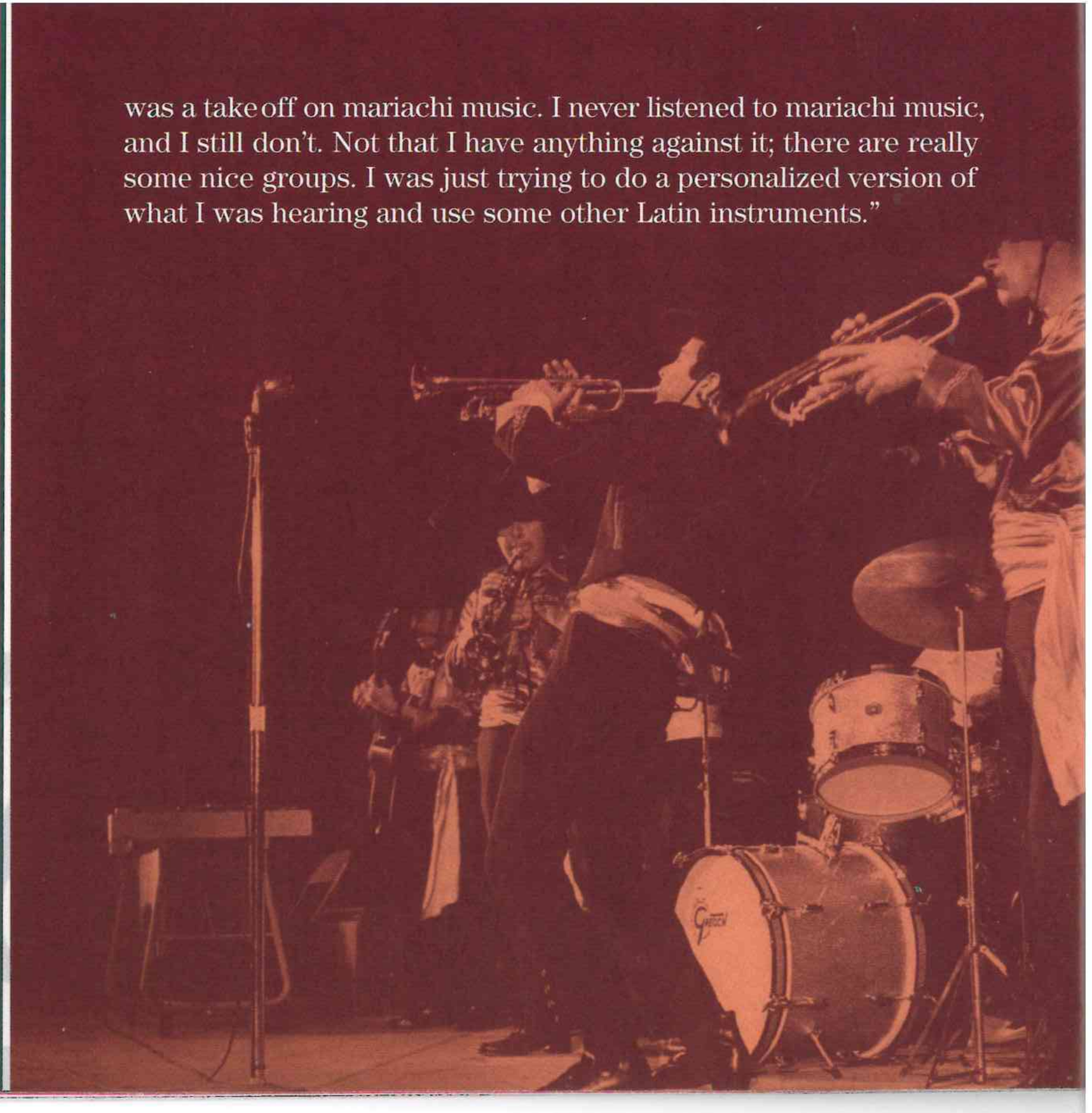
There was, of course, nothing that was actually Mexican about any of this. The brass elements that Alpert used were only vaguely reminiscent of a mariachi horn section, and the sound of the Tijuana Brass had nothing to do with any of the music actually going on in Mexico in the '60s: the early rock 'n' roll of Los Rockin Devils, the swinging orchestrations of Juan Garcia Esquivel, the sophisticated mariachi ballads of Javier Solis, the weepy boleros of Los Tres Ases, the ballroom shuffles of Mariano Merceron.

Behind this house was "the garage," A&M's first home.



"I never listened to mariachi music," admits Alpert, whose olive skin and black hair often led people to think he was Mexican, even though he looked every bit the gringo tourist on the cover of *The Lonely Bull*, raising a shot of tequila in a cardigan sweater. "After *The Lonely Bull*, everyone was climbing on it like it

was a take off on mariachi music. I never listened to mariachi music, and I still don't. Not that I have anything against it; there are really some nice groups. I was just trying to do a personalized version of what I was hearing and use some other Latin instruments."



The Lonely Bull the album, like "The Lonely Bull" the song, knew exactly what it was — the perfect distillation of U.S.-Mexico tourist fantasy into a buoyant and joyful musical soundtrack. "Tijuana is a spectacle, a garish border town," the original *Lonely Bull* liner notes announced. Sin City. The Calcutta of the West. Tiawana. TJ. A place to lose your virginity, get a quick divorce and pick up cheap pharmaceuticals. A place with seedy saloons, sneering federales on the take and jails that eat nice white kids alive. Or as the 1957 film *The Tijuana Story* (starring James Darren) called it, "The most notorious sucker-trap in the Western Hemisphere!"

This was imaginary, postcard Mexico converted into pop instrumentals, a border romance seen through U.S. eyes and destined for U.S. ears. Indeed, without ever meaning to or wanting to, Herb Alpert had invented what soon became known around the world as "The Tijuana Sound." He had invented the sound of a place that, save for a few afternoons in the bullring, he admittedly knew nothing about.

Four decades later, Alpert's achievement was paid perhaps the greatest tribute possible in contemporary pop music. He was sampled. On "Tres Delincuentes," Mexican-American hip-hop trio Delinquent Habits laced the opening horns of "The Lonely Bull" with a flurry of crisp break beats, rapped in Spanish and in English, and brought the Tijuana Brass back, once again, into the spotlight.

2. POP GOES TIJUANA

The tourist version of Tijuana that *The Lonely Bull* was born from was not an Alpert invention. It's been around since the 1920 passage of the Volstead Act and the beginning of the Prohibition Era when Tijuana and its racetracks, casinos and brothels — mostly helmed by U.S. entrepreneurs — became California's (and Hollywood's) most popular destination for excess and consumption. Tijuana was an out-of-country theme park bankrolled by U.S. dollars — a Tijuana built, financed, staffed and patronized by Americans.

"The Lonely Bull" was the first piece of U.S. pop culture to turn that Tijuana into a commercial global export: Tijuana without Tijuana. The Tijuana Brass were, after all, the fourth top-selling artists of the '60s, after Elvis, The Beatles and Sinatra. Between 1962 and 1967 the TJB had 14 Top 40 hit singles. And in 1966 they had five albums in the Top 20 during the same week (four of them in the Top 10).

The avalanche of success that began with "The Lonely Bull" led to a dizzying chain reaction, a profit-clearing South of the Border domino effect that between 1962 and 1970 put "The Tijuana Sound" at the center of the U.S. pop imagination. There was the Alpert-devised spin-off by TJB marimba player Julius Wechter, The Baja

Marimba Band, who donned sombreros and fake mustaches. Los Norte Americanos recorded *The Band I Heard In Tijuana*, an album that included covers of Alpert tunes done in Dixieland and light-jazz styles — songs they insisted were "born in the garish and colorful border town of Tijuana, Mex, where anything can happen and usually does." There were the Border Brass and their *Tijuana Christmas* album. There were Trumpets Unlimited and their *Sounds Tijuana* album, Los Tres Caballeros and their *T Town* album. There were countless *Lennon & McCartney Play Tijuana* attempts, and there was even *Tijuana Bach*.

The impact of *The Lonely Bull*'s musicalization of Tijuana also seeped into the advertising world thanks to Anaheim-based producer George Garabedian. His Mark 65 label cut sponsorship deals with any company that thought newly recorded versions of the Tijuana Brass' "Tijuana Taxi" or "Spanish Flea" could help sell gasoline or groceries: Pet Ice Cream, Phillips 66, Alpha Beta, Der Wienerschnitzel, Sprite, Kentucky Fried Chicken (the beloved *Tijuana Picnic* album) and Taco Bell. ("Taco Bell's five delicious food items are as authentic as the piñata and the mariachi band, yes, as authentic and exciting as Mexico itself.")

And then there were the spoofs. A *Get Smart* episode had Agent 86 infiltrate the KAOS-controlled band, The Tijuana Tin, featuring "Herb Talbert." Jazz saxophonist James Moody recorded "Hey Herb, Where's Alpert?," the golden girls of The Frivolous Five

did a sour cream parody of *Whipped Cream* and, perhaps best of all, comedian Lou Jacobi assembled his own band, Al Tijuana And His Jewish Brass. Jacobi dressed up like a matador and with his own Jewish brass behind him walked through the Lower East Side surrounded by black and Latino children. "Dat's not the sveetest music this side of the Rio Grande," Al Tijuana barked, confusing Tijuana with Texas, "Dat's the sveetest music eidah side of the Rio Grande!"

The world had a Tijuana explosion on its hands, all because of a day at the bullring. "I was shocked that it happened," admits Alpert. "I never imagined how big it would get."

But in the early '60s, with the country in the midst of what President Kennedy would call "a moral crisis" just months before his assassination, American listeners of all ages embraced the music of Herb Alpert and the Tijuana Brass like an intergenerational balm. The light, simple and memorable melodies that Alpert was drawn to, and the music's playful evocation of cultural and international difference (a closer-to-home version of the exotica boom's tiki fantasies in the '50s), offered an escape from picket lines, police violence and protests against racial segregation. It is a striking contrast, indeed: as Martin Luther King, Jr., spoke to the masses who gathered to march on Washington in 1963, speaking of "the chains of discrimination," millions of Americans were whistling along to hopeful dreams of a world South of the Border.

Alpert had clearly given America a vision of itself that it needed. Friendly, optimistic and free of discord. The original liner notes to *The Lonely Bull* may have claimed: "This is Tijuana music," but really the music was about America itself, music that listeners in the '60s would keep returning to all decade long.

— Josh Kun

Josh Kun is a Los Angeles-based writer who teaches at UC Riverside. His book, Strangers Among Sounds: Music, Race, And America, *will be published in 2005 by UC Press*

TRACK LIST

1. **THE LONELY BULL (EL SOLO TORO)**
   (Sol Lake)
2. **EL LOBO (THE WOLF)**
   (Harry Green/Sol Lake)
3. **TIJUANA SAUERKRAUT**
   (Herb Alpert/Jerry Moss)
4. **DESAFINADO**
   (Antonio Carlos Jobim/Newton Mendonca)
5. **MEXICO**
   (Boudleaux Bryant)
6. **NEVER ON SUNDAY**
   (Manos Hadjidakis/Billy Towne)
7. **STRUTTIN' WITH MARIA**
   (Herb Alpert)

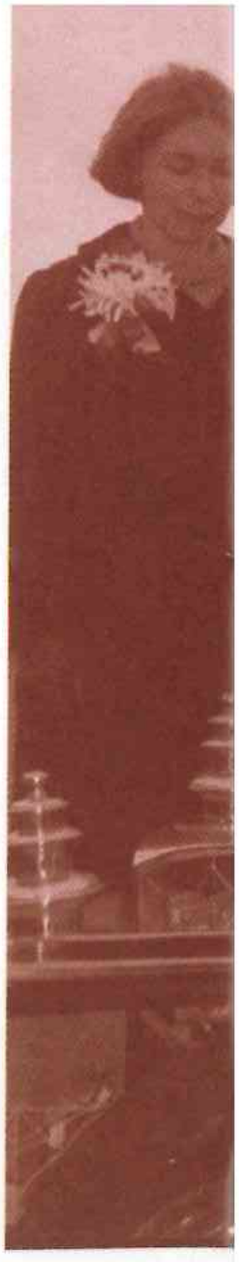
8. **LET IT BE ME**
(Gilbert Becaud/Mann Curtis/Pierre Delanoe)

9. **ACAPULCO 1922**
(Herb Alpert)

10. **LIMBO ROCK**
(Billy Strange)

11. **CRAWFISH**
(Lake Doran/Sol Lake)

12. **A QUIET TEAR (LAGRIMA QUIETA)**
(Herb Alpert)



Original Release Credits:

Produced by **Herb Alpert and Jerry Moss**
At Conway Recorders, Hollywood, California

Engineer: **Charles Underwood**

Mastering: **Ami Hadani**

Album Design: **Peter Whorf**

Originally released as A&M 101 (December 1962)

Reissue Credits:

Project Supervision: **Shawn Amos**

Remastering: **Ted Jensen at Sterling Sound**

Package Design: **Tornado Design, Los Angeles**
Art Direction: **Al Quattrocchi & Jeff Smith** Design: **Aaron Kahan**

Artwork Supervision: **John Roberts**

Package Supervision: **Jeff Palo**

Editorial Supervision: **Julee Stover**

Project Assistance: **Derek Dressler, Claire Eskwith, Sean Mooney**

Photos courtesy of **Herb Alpert**

Special Thanks: **Jerry Moss, Jeff Gold, Chris Justice, Gerry Wersh, Gene Sculatti, Eimear Bradbury and Shonda Smith**

No bulls were harmed in the making of this record.

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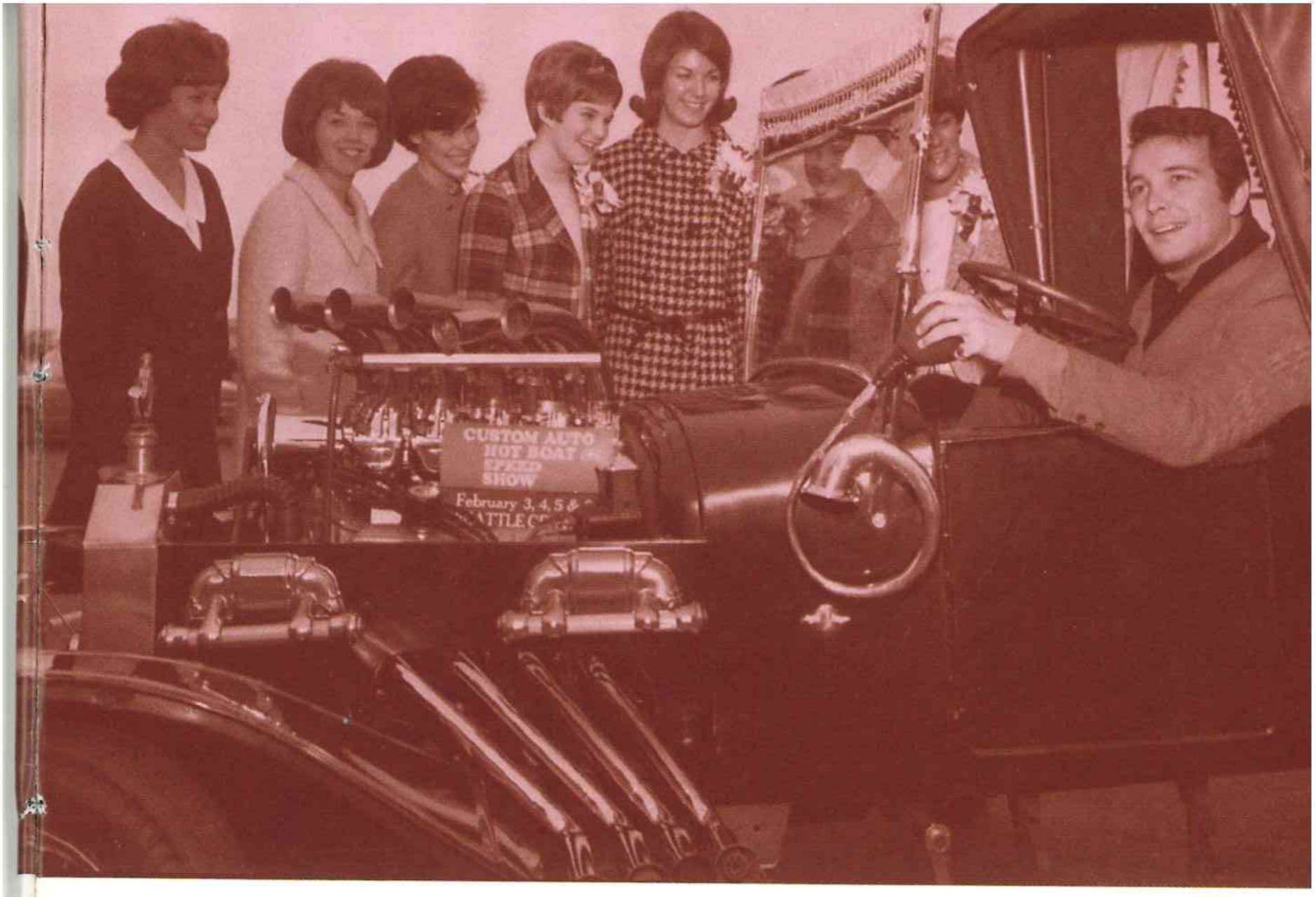

DK 32771

THE LONELY BULL

Herb Alpert & the Tijuana Brass

This is Tijuana music—the noisy Mexican-American voices in the narrow streets, the confusion of color and motion—captured in the sound of the Tijuana Brass.

Tijuana is a spectacle, a garish border town....But it is also sometimes a strangely wistful, romantic place, and that quality is represented here by the often haunting trumpet of Herb Alpert.

"The Lonely Bull" started it all. Herb organized the Tijuana Brass to combine a persistent melody written by a friend with the inspiration of the Tijuana bull-ring. What emerged was a swinging musical collaboration, and a hit. And now this album, and a chance to hear Tijuana in all its aspects, played by trumpeter-arranger-composer Herb Alpert, and the bright, bold, versatile Tijuana Brass.

The Lonely Bull (El Solo Toro) 2:29 / El Lobo (The Wolf) 3:00 / Tijuana Sauerkraut 2:44 / Desafinado 3:42 / Mexico 2:36 / Never On Sunday 2:38 / Struttin' With Maria 2:10 / Let It Be Me 2:55 / Acapulco 1922 2:38 / Limbo Rock 2:05 / Crawfish 2:20 / A Quiet Tear (Lágrima Quieta) 2:23

Produced by Herb Alpert and Jerry Moss
At Conway Recorders, Hollywood, California
Engineer: Charles Underwood
Mastering: Ami Hadani
Album Design: Peter Whorf

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